



TWIN CITY LINES

WINTER 2010



TWIN CITY LINES

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The Minnesota Streetcar Museum operates the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis and the Excelsior Streetcar Line in Excelsior. Its mission is to preserve Minnesota's electric railway heritage.

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CORRECTIONS & NEW INFO

The commuter train map in the Fall issue needs correcting. The station labeled Franklin Ave. on the Milwaukee Road south of downtown Minneapolis was actually Short Line Junction, also called South Minneapolis in some timetables. Gladstone, northeast of downtown St. Paul, was actually called Gloster, as shown in the photo on page 8.

Another piece of suburban train lore has surfaced. The Winter 2010 issue of Hennepin History magazine includes an article on the Minneapolis Driving Track, a race track for harness, bicycle and auto racing located at 36th and Minnehaha Avenue in south Minneapolis from 1888 until 1903. The Milwaukee Road ran special trains to the race track from downtown Minneapolis, even though there was no regular station at 36th Street on their line to Minnehaha Park. The service continued even after TCRT extended its Minnehaha Avenue streetcar line to the park in 1891.

Don Olsen writes:

"From 1932 to 1937, my parents rented a home in Cottagewood, near Deephaven on Lake Minnetonka each summer. My Dad commuted to his office in Minneapolis on the M&STL, which was close by. During that period, the "St. Looie" used one of their GE gas-electrics on that run. On several Saturdays (half-days were the usual then), I went with him, and remember how fascinated I was with the gas-electric car.

The service was well-patronized, and wooden benches were placed in the baggage compartment to provide more seats. That suited me just fine, because you could hear the engine and look into the engine compartment and watch the engineer through the bulkhead door window. That's where I stationed myself for most of the trip. Unfortunately, my memory fails to recall how long the trip took, but we then took a streetcar from the station to the Flour Exchange where Dad worked."

Dave Norman writes:

"In your comment in the article in the Summer 2009 issue about notices to trainmen, you speculated that the notice on November 19, 1906, which required crews to ventilate the car when approaching the end of the line, might have to do with getting rid of fumes from the coal stove. My guess is that

ventilating the car might be a good idea even during those times of the year when the stove was not being used.

That far back, deodorants had been invented, but I'm guessing that only a small portion of the population used them. Also, in that era, many people didn't take a bath every day. When people were being nostalgic, remember how they would mention the Saturday Night Bath (implying that it was something special, not an everyday thing?) Some blue collar workers might have worked up a sweat or been exposed to smelly substances during their workday. Ventilating the car at the end of the line would have gotten rid of all those odors."

The Winter 2009 issue described the baggage car that made daily trips to Lake Minnetonka. Here's the TCRT diagram of that car. They made one of these for every piece of rolling stock in the fleet.

Cars	Built	Cars	Built	Cars	Built	Cars	Built	Make	T. S.	Air	Christensen	Trolley Wheel
34	11-9-05							Weight	54,540	Air Cyl.	10"	Steel Underfr
								Cost		J. Box	Symington	41" from railro
								Width	9'-2"	Trucks	Baldwin	
								Seats		Brakes	Inside hung	
								Capacity	30,000	Axles	Steel 6'-0"	
								Exits	See For	Journals	4 1/8"	
								Rear Door	Single	Wheels	34" Steel	
								Platform	Straight	Wheel fit	51"	
								Heater	Electric	Gears	57T Cast Steel	
								Register		Gear fit	51"	
								Motors	4-GE 87	Pinions	Cast Forged Steel	
								50HP per motor		Trolley Base	GE No 6	
								Total				
								One Car	Controller	K 14		
												BAGGAGE CAR
												Sheet No

Front cover: There was no snow yet on November 24, 1948, but the Christmas decorations were up on East 7th Street, looking west from Cedar Street. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

Inside front cover: An early snowstorm on November 26, 1952 messed up the schedule of the Chicago Avenue line, shown here at 17th Street. The car has passed up this crowd and is undoubtedly stuffed to the doors. The size of the waiting crowd says they've been there for awhile. For more photos of winter difficulties, see page 14.

Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.

MSM NEWS SUMMARY

See Streetcar Currents for the full story (www.trolleyride.org)

The George Isaacs Car barn at Lake Harriet now has a fire suppression system. A similar system was installed two years ago in the museum's Excelsior car barn. Both car barns have also received new security alarm systems, along with the Linden Hills depot. Fire suppression was the museum's highest priority, following disastrous fires at two other museums.

The museum is trying new special events to attract visitors. New this year was the PJ Trolley. In the evening, parents bring their small children, hopefully in their pajamas, for an evening ride, followed by a book reading by a local children's author. A partnership with Wild Rumpus Bookstore, the monthly event was extremely successful.

One victim this year of the Great Recession was the Lake Shore Electric Trolley Museum in Ohio, which recently liquidated its collection. For some time, MSM volunteers have had their eye on an ancient Dupont power truck owned by Lake Shore. Built in 1894, it is an early version of the truck that was under Winona streetcar #10, currently being restored at our Excelsior car barn. It has the correct castings, gears and motors. Structurally simple, it can be lengthened and strengthened to properly fit under #10. MSM was able to acquire the truck at a bargain price, and having it will both shorten the length of the restoration and reduce its cost. Other useful components were also acquired.

Ridership in 2009 grew slightly over 2008. This is encouraging, considering the state of the economy. Merchandise sales were down.

MSM has received a \$3800 state Cultural Heritage grant to sleeve its photo collection



TRANSIT TOPICS

Published by and for the Employees of Duluth-Superior Transit Company.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT DST

Transit Topics was the employee newsletter of Duluth-Superior Transit Company. In 1934 and 1935 it included some stories that give a real insight into the work life of streetcar employees.

All in the Day's Work of a Car Starter

By E. H. Hassell

"Ding-a-ling-ling-ling," goes the telephone.

"Car starter."

"When do I get a streetcar, please?"

"Where are you please, and where do you wish to go?"

"I'm right here at home and I wish to go to Woodland."

"Where do you wish to board the car?"

"I always take the car at 16th Avenue East and 4th Street."

"The next Woodland car will pass there at 1:10 p. m."

"Thank you so much."

"You're welcome."

As I hang up the telephone to check a few cars, I see a little woman dressed in black waiting at the window.

"Can I buy tokens here?"

"You surely can, Madam. How many do you wish, please?"

"A half dollar's worth."

"Six tokens and five cents change. Thank you."

"You're welcome. I like to get them here so I don't bother the motorman when I get on."

"We're glad to have you get them here."

I hurriedly check more cars as a small boy comes to the window.

"I want to buy some school tickets."

"Got your card?"

"What card?"

"The one they give you at school so you can come here and buy tickets. We can't sell them to you unless you have that card."

"Aw, nurts!"

After running through a car number I turn and look down into the face of a trusting but bewildered old lady. "I left my shopping bag on that last car going up there. It's got an apron in it my niece gave me. How can I get it?"

"That car will be back in 40 minutes. I will try and get it for you. Will you come back to see if I've found it?"

"Oh, my yes. I wouldn't lose that apron for anything."

My next customer is a well dressed old gentleman who lays down a \$5 bill.

"Stack of whites."

"One roll of tokens, \$3.60, \$1.40 change. Thank you sir." And with a friendly smile and nod he's gone.

Two blasts of a whistle from a car coming down the hill. That means grab two rolls of tokens, a roll of nickels, lock up the window and door, and run over to meet the car.

"What you want, George?"

"Roll of tokens. Here's your money. Got some nickels there? Well I'll take them, too. Here's \$2 more. Thank you, Ernie."

"You're welcome, George." And I hurry back to check the cars that have passed while I have been out.

A young business man comes hurrying up to the window and lays down a check.



The starter's booth at 3rd Avenue W. and Superior St.
North East Minnesota Historical Society collection.

"Two rolls of tokens, please."

"Yes sir. That looks like a good check. Thank you, sir."

"Will you give me a receipt, please?"

"Certainly, here it is."

It's 1:49 p.m. Car 203 pulls up, going out to Fairmount Park. A worried operator comes running over.

"Ernie, my rear doors won't work."

"All right, we'll have them fixed." Reaching for station telephone. "Station." (short and snappy.) "Bill, Car 203, Fairmount Park, 26th and 3rd Street, 1:59 p. m., rear doors out of order."

"All right, Ernie. We'll get it."

The next to appear upon my ever-changing stage is an irate old lady who indignantly inquires: "What's the matter with the Woodland cars. I've waited down at 2nd Avenue for over an hour. This service is terrible."

"I'm sorry, Madam. Woodland cars go up over Fourth Street now."

"O, dear me. They're always changing things. How do they expect we're going to know? They ought to advertise it in the papers."

"I'm sorry if you have been inconvenienced. They have been running over Fourth Street for months now."

And so it goes from morning to night. Between darting out to catch signs that are slipping, selling tokens and school tickets, looking up lost articles, answering telephones, giving out information, checking cars and running through car numbers, there is never time to kill. We start work and "Presto!" it's time to check up and go home. Do I get tired? Sure I do, but it's fun.

"Battle of Duluth Heights"

The night of July 15, 1921 was a pleasant one. LeRoy Gillette was making his last trip at 12:33 a. m. on the Highland line. He had one passenger—a young man who sat dozing on the front seat just inside the bulkhead

window. Two more passengers boarded the car at Lake Avenue, a large man and a small one. The small man went inside and sat down beside the dozing passenger, while the big man stood behind Gillette.

Gillette got out and threw the switch at the turnout, thinking that now in just two minutes his day's work would be over and then—home. He returned to the car and had just applied the power when WHAM! He was struck on the head and the blow was repeated. Gillette did not drop, but started to turn. His assailant then fired the gun he had been using as a club. The first shot missed but the second went through LeRoy's right arm.

Meanwhile the smaller ruffian attacked the passenger while the car was running, twisting and turning, swaying from side to side. Gillette swung around, grabbing the thug around the neck with his right arm, turning his head to look into the muzzle of a Colt .38. LeRoy felt his life depended upon gaining possession of the gun. All over the vestibule they struggled. Blood was streaming from Gillette's head and arm. All the vestibule windows were broken, as well as the glass in the doors. Meanwhile the passenger kept the other thug busy while the car continued its wild course. Finally Gillette managed to seize the hold-up man's wrist and suddenly got possession of the gun. Here the Battle of the Heights ended as quickly as it had started, for both the ruffians fled through the car and jumped out the rear window.

The car was just pulling into the station and Gillette stopped it at the right time and place and got off. He was taken to the hospital for treatment but refused to stay there. The hold-up men were never found. LeRoy has the gun as a grim souvenir of that memorable evening.

Our "St. Louis", the "Private Car" of the Gay Nineties

By W. J. Holmes

This car had all the luxurious appointments of a North Coast Limited observation car—ornate draperies festooned the windows—elegantly upholstered chairs invited one to be seated—thick "comfy" rugs adorned the floor—interior fittings were of exquisite design and most popular of all—neatly tucked away in one corner, the "Fridgidaire"—1890 model—with a complete stock of everything a person with a real thirst might desire. Also a good supply of the finest brands of cigars.

Mr. Wellington had charge of the commissary and used to take inventory after each trip.

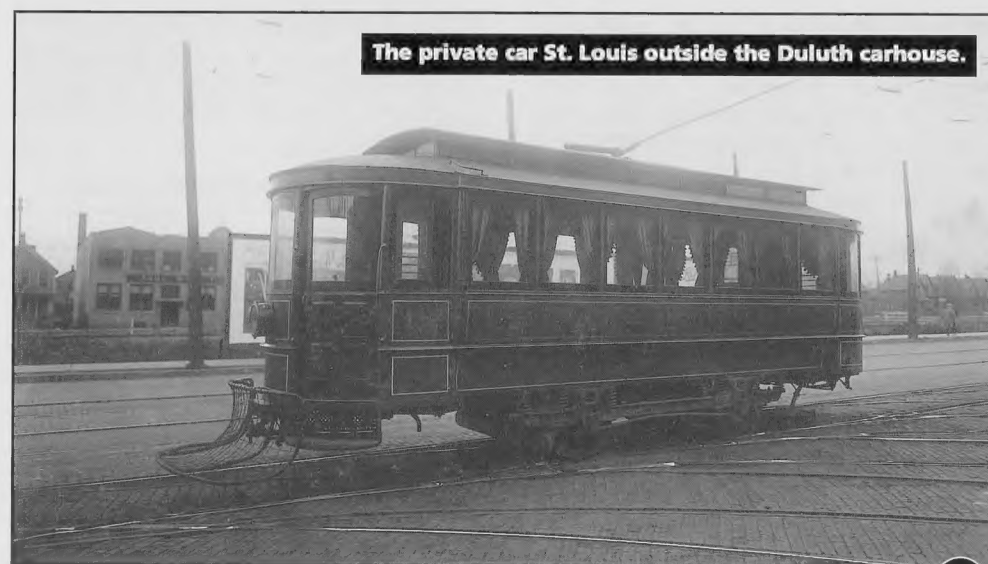
When refreshments were being served Mr. Warren always warned "nothing stronger than ginger ale for the crew."

Being a native of one of the original dry states this admonition was hardly necessary in my case; however on one occasion it required a real argument to convince the superintendent of our "abstemiousness." We had discharged

our load uptown and were pulling in. As we approached the West End my driver—the late David Wright—popularly known as the "Admiral"—because of his neat appearance and pompous carriage—called me up to the front and suggested a glass of ginger ale, which I served—not with impunity, however, for the eagle eye of one of the officers had observed us and we spent the following day on the carpet "explaining".

On another occasion—bound for South Superior with Mr. Warren and a group of business men, Motorman Wright forgot the Soo Line crossing and passed over it without it being flagged. Mr. Warren looked at me and smilingly remarked—"it is fortunate for us that the "Soo Flyer" is not due just at this time."

The "St. Louis" played an important role in society as well as in business. Many of the social lights of that gay age—friends of the management, and others, directly or indirectly interested in the company, used it for entertainment purposes, such as cruises to the club house at Billings Park and to the Northland Country Club—sight-seeing jaunts around the



city and in the winter snowshoeing and skiing parties at Woodland and Lester Park.

The Luther Mendenhalls and Hartmans were the most frequent users of the car and I might add the most generous to the crew. If we were out during meal time we were always provided for, and although the officials "frowned" on the accepting of "gratuities", rules and regulations were always conveniently suspended when there was a dollar or two in sight and I remember on one occasion Mr. Mendenhall gave us each a five dollar gold piece. This unusual outburst of generosity was prompted by the fact that it was Christmas Day.

My "pilot" was usually the man I happened to be working with on my regular run.

With the advent of the automobile the St. Louis gradually lapsed into disuse and was subsequently dismantled.

"All In the Day's Work of A Transit Steno"

By Margaret Dahl

"Yes, this is the Street Railway company. You lost your umbrella? Just one minute, please, and I'll look and see if it was turned in. No, I am very sorry, it was not turned in. You're welcome."

"Now, what's the matter? You want to be excused? Just a minute and if you can. That's okay."

"What time does your husband get off for dinner? From 12 to 1:10, but I don't think he will be home. All right, goodbye."

"You were over a half hour late so that means two days on the rocks. Too bad."

"You want a time check? What for? Just a moment and I'll see if you can get one. -It will be all right. How much do you want? \$5.00? Sign here."

"You have to work that extra or else be scratched. -You want to be



scratched? I'll book you up for tomorrow."

"You want to get off your second shift? I haven't anyone here right now but I'll try to get someone by that time."

"What's wrong with your car? The brakes are slack? -Car number 160, due at Third and Ogden at 12:42 p. m. needs a car change."

"You want a new punch? What's wrong with yours?"

"You lost your day card holder? Here's a new one. See that you don't lose this one."

"Dictation? -Yes, sir."

And so goes the day until -Bang! -5:00 p. m.

The Machinery That Almost Thinks

**By Walfred Swanson,
Substation Foreman**

No doubt you all have passed structures similar to the handsome little building pictured at right. "A pleasant place to work," you may have commented, noting the agreeable surroundings and the sunshine flooding the large windows.

It may surprise some of you to learn that except for the man who makes the

rounds inspecting them, no one works there.

Yet the functions of this sturdy little establishment are very intricate and of vital importance in the service of the public. To better illustrate the operation of the substation, let us take the power that drives a street car or trolley bus and follow it from its source.

The electrical energy is generated at the Thompson Dam, and transmitted at 66,000 volt 25 cycle alternating current to the Power Company's 15th Avenue West substation in Duluth. At this station it is "stepped down" to 13,200 volts and delivered to our substations where it is stepped down to 430 volts. At this voltage it goes through synchronous converters (rotating machines) where it is changed to a 600-volt direct current to suit the motors of street cars and trolley buses.

In passing, a word of comment about alternating and direct current may be helpful. Alternating current reverses in direction at regular intervals. It can be generated at low voltage or pressure and then "stepped up" by transformers to any desired higher voltage for transmission to

distant points. Transmitting power at a high voltage cuts down line losses and effects a saving in copper required.

Direct current flows uniformly in one direction. It cannot be regulated by transformers and it can be generated only at a limited voltage. Direct current is particularly applicable for street railway use due to the characteristics of the direct current motor used in this service.

A street car motor is geared directly to the wheels and the speed of the motor varies with that of the car. The propelling force required is high at slow speeds as in starting and low at free running speeds. Because it is especially adapted for such work the direct current motor is used on street cars.

The control equipment of our automatic substations consists of an assemblage of contactors, relays, master switches and other devices especially adapted to this service. To explain the functioning of the automatic control from beginning to end, would make a long story. I will outline here only the principle steps in normal operation.



The starting up and shutting down of the Automatic Station is governed by the load demand on the part of the system in which the station is located. As cars or trolley buses enter the section governed by a substation, the voltage on the trolley decreases due to the heavy current demand of the cars or buses. The starting up indication is given by a master element or voltage relay. The operating coil of this relay is connected to the trolley and any variation of the trolley voltage causes a corresponding movement of the element in the relay. When the voltage falls to a certain predetermined point, this relay closes a circuit for an automatic time delay relay, and after a suitable time delay, the other control devices are started in their proper sequence of operation. The time delay feature prevents the machine from starting up unnecessarily when the voltage drops only momentarily.

The converter starts, builds up to full voltage, and is then connected to the trolley by automatic switches, the whole operation taking about 45 seconds. The station will then remain in constant operation as long as there is sufficient load demand on that section of the system. As the load diminishes to an uneconomical point, a shutting down indication is given by the operation of an underload relay. If the load remains at or below a certain value for a predetermined time, the converter will shut down and the high tension lines are disconnected from the transformer by a 15,000 volt automatic circuit breaker.

Oil circuit breakers are used in high voltage alternating current circuits. All contacts are enclosed in tanks filled with oil and the circuit is closed and opened under oil. A mineral oil of high dielectric (non-conductor) strength is used in the breakers. Our stations are motor operated and fitted with tripping and locking-out devices for emergencies.

In addition to control devices used in the normal operation of the machinery, we have several protective devices to guard the equipment in cases of emergency. Emergencies may arise from heating of bearings, grounded trolley wires, overloads, overspeed and underspeed of the machines, overheating of machine windings, etc. The action of the protective devices in cases of emergency is swift and accurate—much more so than that of any human being. No time is required to think; they act instantly.

Automatic control in our substations has been in service about fifteen years. Ours were the first installed in the northwest. Mechanical marvels such as the automatic substation are fair examples of the complex equipment and the ceaseless application of human care and skill which make possible an 18 1/2 mile trolley ride for very little more than it once cost to ride a single mile behind a mule.

THE ROBBINSDALE LINE

The Minneapolis and St. Paul Suburban Railway was the TCRT corporate subsidiary responsible for the portion of the streetcar system outside the city limits of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Best known for the Hopkins/Lake Minnetonka and White Bear/Stillwater lines, the shorter lines to South St. Paul, Columbia Heights, St. Louis Park and Robbinsdale were also part of it.

The Robbinsdale line started as the independent North Side Street Railway. In 1891 it built from a connection with TCRT at 32nd Avenue N. (later renamed Lowry Avenue) and Penn Avenue. It reached Robbinsdale via 32nd, Oakdale Avenue, private right of way and Hubbard Avenue, ending at 42nd Avenue in downtown Robbinsdale. A shuttle car ran between Robbinsdale and the TCRT connection.



TCRT acquired North Side Street Railway in 1906, and instituted through service to downtown. Extension of the Penn Avenue line north to Dowling Avenue in 1910 eliminated the through service and the shuttle was reinstated.

This lasted until 1914, when major changes took place. A more direct route west of Penn via Broadway was opened, causing the abandonment of the track on 32nd Avenue. The original line north of 36th and Oakdale was abandoned, and new track was laid on France Avenue and West Broadway. Essentially it paralleled the original line one block to the east, thereby serving the center of the Robbinsdale business district. Exactly where it

ended is a bit of a mystery. TCRT records from 1915 and 1926 show the line ending at 44th Avenue N. However, in later years, we know it ended at 42nd Avenue. Exactly when it was shortened is unknown. With the line changes, cars ran through to downtown Minneapolis again, and continued beyond, all the way to St. Louis Park.

As built in 1914, the Robbinsdale line was all single track. Double track was extended to Russell Avenue in 1915, to a new turnaround loop at Washburn Avenue in 1923, to Oakdale and Ewing Avenue in 1929 and to France and West Broadway in 1942. Service ran every 10 minutes to

A.M.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
P.M.	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						

Good only on
First 8th Av. S. & 20th Av. No. Car
leaving 32d Av. No.

Robbinsdale Line

5 003557

NO. 1000

It is unlawful to sell, dispose of, or give this Transfer to any person except the Conductor or Bus Operator. THE GIVER AND RECEIVER ARE EQUALLY GUILTY UNDER THE LAW. Please read conditions on other side.

NO. 1000

NO. 1000

A006535	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	STATION						
	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Crystal Lake & Penn	North Side Crosstown						
ROBBINSDALE & ST. LOUIS PARK							Franklin Ave.	Franklin Ave.					
IT IS UNLAWFUL to sell, dispose of, or give this Transfer to any person except the Conductor or Bus Operator. THE GIVER AND RECEIVER ARE EQUALLY GUILTY UNDER THE LAW. Please read conditions on other side.							25	25					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Lines not Crossing Franklin Ave.	Lines not Crossing Lake St.
15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15		
30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30		
45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45	45		
												EMERGENCY	

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Station	Suburban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
25	26	27	28	29	30	31							EMERGENCY

ROBBINSDALE

1 003062

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Lowry

W. Broadway

11th St.

AM
P.M.
N
S

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Station	Suburban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	CONTINUATION	CONTINUATION
25	26	27	28	29	30	31							EMERGENCY

ROBBINSDALE--FRANKLIN

4 017736

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Lowry

W. Broadway

AM
P.M.
N
S

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Station	Suburban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	CONTINUATION	CONTINUATION
25	26	27	28	29	30	31							EMERGENCY

28th Ave. S. - Robbinsdale

37 19515

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Lowry

Broadway

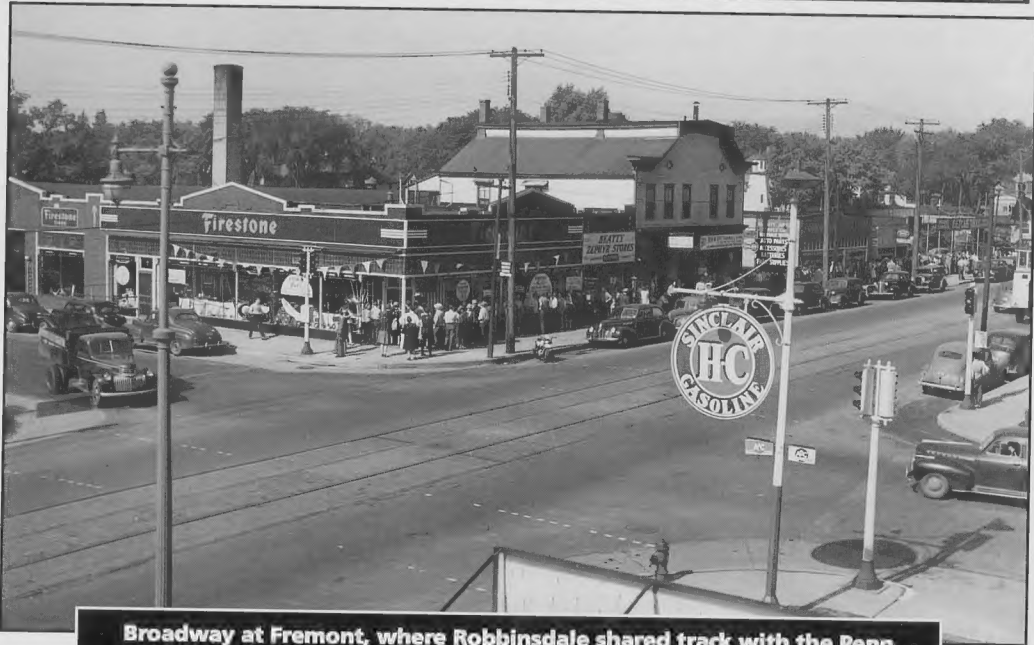
Franklin Ave.

AM
P.M.
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S

These transfers trace the history of the Robbinsdale lines and its various pairings with other lines.



From downtown to Plymouth Avenue, Robbinsdale shared the tracks in Washington Avenue with the Plymouth line, N. Washington line and streetcars deadheading to/from North Side Station. At left is a Great Northern switcher working the alley industrial spur between Washington Avenue and N. 3rd Street. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Broadway at Fremont, where Robbinsdale shared track with the Penn Avenue and Broadway crosstown lines. Minneapolis Star-Journal photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



By the time this photo was taken in July 1953, all service on Broadway at Irving had been abandoned except for the late night Penn Avenue franchise car. This is the only known photo of this curving stretch. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



At Broadway and Penn, the Penn Avenue line turned north. The intersection contained a wye for short turning cars.

Washburn loop, every 20 minutes beyond) The single track on Broadway in Robbinsdale was offset in the street, rather than centered. It was intended to eventually be the northbound track. As a result, southbound cars ran against the flow of auto traffic.

The route to Minneapolis followed Broadway to Washington Avenue, then downtown. That changed in 1920, when the new shortcut was opened between Broadway-Emerson and downtown via Emerson and N. 7th Street. The link with the St. Louis Park line was broken. Robbinsdale cars skirted the north edge of downtown via 7th Street, 2nd Avenue N., and 1st Avenue N., wying out at 11th Street.

The entire line was converted to one-man operation in 1932.

In 1935, Robbinsdale was combined end to end with the Franklin Avenue line. It avoided the center of downtown by using 11th Street. When Franklin was abandoned in 1940, Robbinsdale was through routed with the 28th Avenue S. line. This returned it to the original route to downtown via Broadway and Washington.

About 1940, the Twin Cities' first traffic circle (they call them roundabouts today) was constructed at the complex intersection of Lowry, Broadway, Oakdale and Victory Memorial Drive. This is where the Robbinsdale line turns from Broadway onto Oakdale. The tracks were left in their original location, which caused them to penetrate the traffic circle twice, making the turn at its hub.

Robbinsdale was one of the earlier abandonments. The line was shortened to 36th and France in 1947, and was abandoned completely in 1948. Because it shared track with the Penn Avenue, Broadway and Plymouth lines, those segments continued in service until the general conversion to bus in 1953.

RUNNING THE ROBBINSDALE LINE

-Edwin Nelson

Edwin Nelson worked as a TCRT motorman from 1946 to 1954. Ed documented the streetcar system through photos, research gleaned from company records and his own voluminous notes on day-to-day operations. What follows are some of Ed's observations about the Robbinsdale line, which he refers to as the "Yellow Streak".

Ed uses some terms that may need explaining. The Washburn loop was a short line terminus located at Broadway and Washburn, near the Minneapolis city limits. The "baby owl" was a late night run that didn't stay out the entire night. "He went into the single track against the lights" means he passed the red signal that protected the mile of single track at the outer end of the Robbinsdale line. "Putting it in the corner" means turning the controller handle to the highest powered setting, the eighth notch. "Lake St. men" refers to the motormen from Lake Street Station, which shared the operation of the Robbinsdale line with North Side Station, where Ed worked. Running "hot" means running ahead of schedule.

"A fast motorman in several ways was one named Kloster. He was fired in early July (1947); one day he had wyyed at Washburn loop, and wrapped his controller up in the corner as he came out of the loop, and hit a westbound car on the non-clearance curve. I wish I had seen that.

Also a fast driver was Wiebe #1537, regular at this time on the Robbinsdale baby owl. One night an auto followed him down Broadway on his pullin trip (2:30 a.m.) and clocked him at 55 m.p.h. Another night, on his 11:30 trip, he went in on the single track against the lights, and met Frank Grassman coming out at 37th. Frank must have used some very choice language. A bit



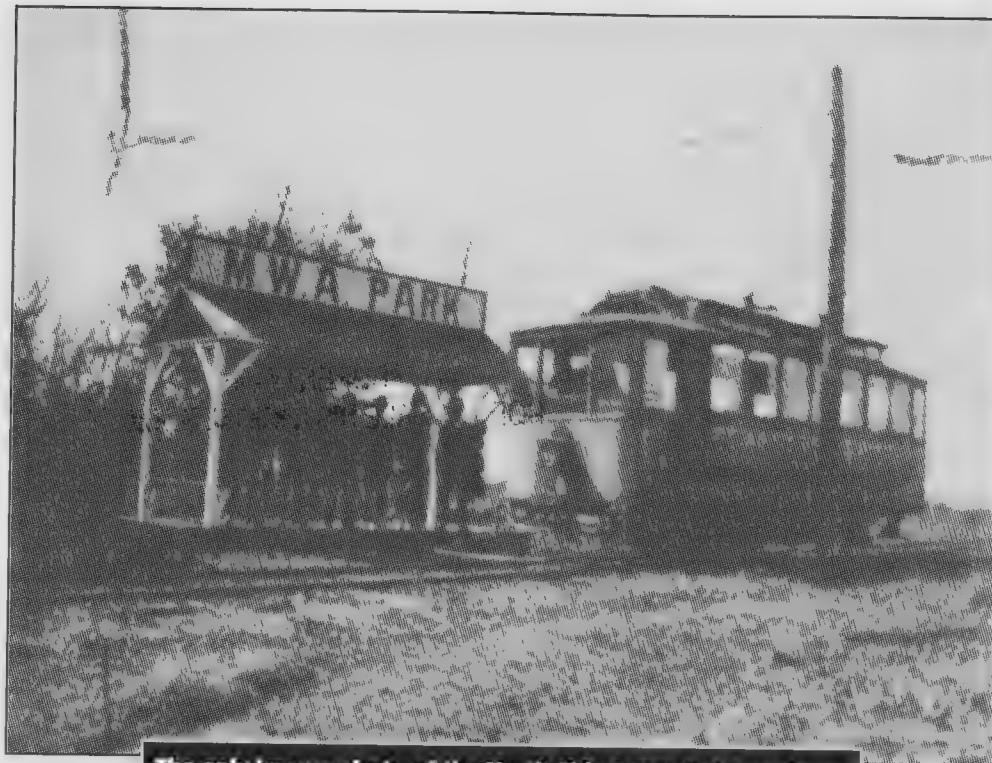
A fireman's 1947 funeral (the large building at center is a fire house) delays a Robbinsdale car, visible in the distance. The Penn Avenue line diverges in the foreground. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



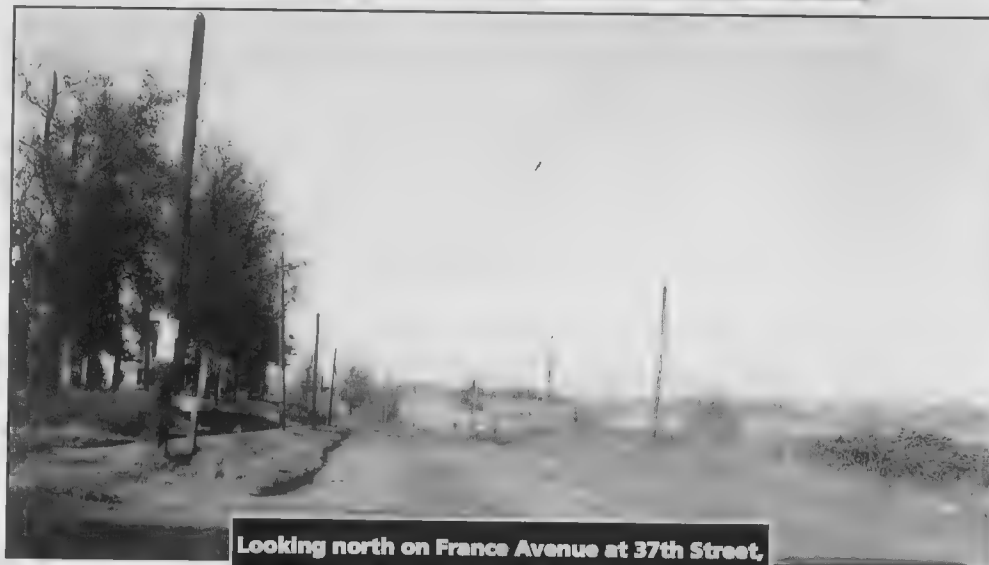
These photos are from a 1920s series that documents Broadway from Penn Avenue to the city limits, prior to double tracking. The top view looks south at the 26th Avenue Intersection. The bottom shows the 1923-built loop at Washburn Avenue diverging at right.



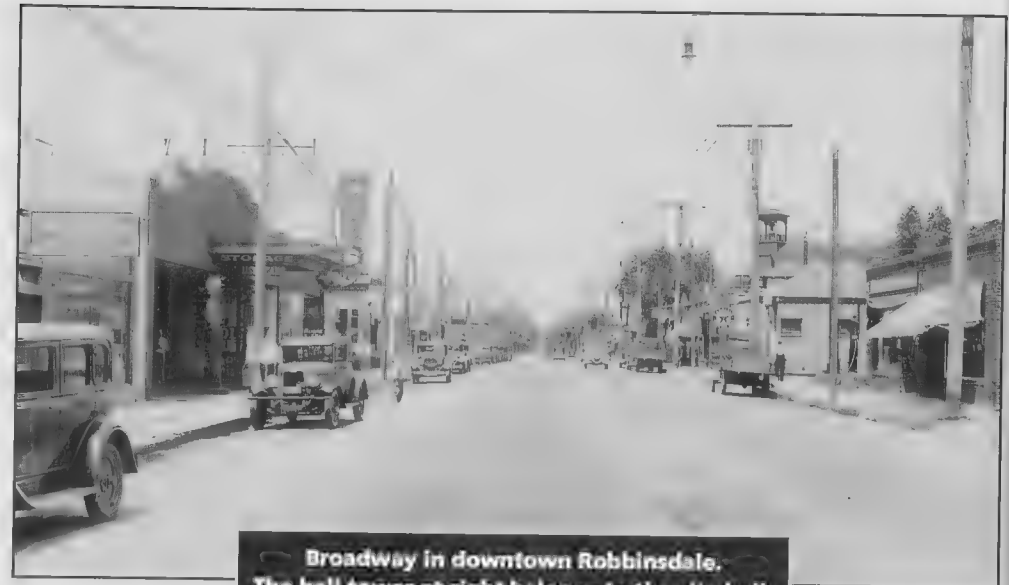
The three photos at right show the complex intersection of Broadway, Lowry, Oakdale Avenue and Victory Drive, where the line left Minneapolis and entered Robbinsdale. They pan from looking southeast down Broadway in the top view to northwest on Oakdale in the bottom view. About 1940, a traffic circle was built here. The tracks passed through the middle of it. It was replaced later with the present highway overpass. Bottom two Minnesota Historical Society collection.



The only known photo of the North Side Street Railway shows its stop at Woodmen's Park, which was located at 36th and France. Robbinsdale Historical Society collection.



Looking north on France Avenue at 37th Street, with Twin Lake in the distance. Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Broadway in downtown Robbinsdale. The bell tower at right belongs to the city hall. Robbinsdale Historical Society collection.



The offset single track in Robbinsdale required southbound streetcars to run against the flow of northbound traffic, creating situations such as this. Robbinsdale Historical Society collection.



Two views on Broadway in downtown Robbinsdale between 41st and 42nd Ave. Top Minnesota Historical Society collection.



A car emerges from the 42nd Avenue leg of the wye and heads for Minneapolis.



earlier, a motorist who could hardly keep up with Wiebe finally caught him at a car stop and asked sarcastically if he was on time, and Wiebe yanked the motorist out of his auto and beat him up. (so I heard).

The Yellow Streak was really quite the line. When I studented on it in '46 with Ted Berquam, I found one trip I was four minutes hot going north at 5th & Hennepin, and being just fresh from the job of checking, I dawdled a bit to cut it to two minutes hot at the check point at Plymouth. Ted jumped all over me and told me to hurry up, 'You'll never make the lights.' All the way up Broadway, with trucks and cars and pedestrians criss-crossing every which way in front of us, he just kept saying 'Put it in the corner, you'll never make the lights.' And I didn't make the lights.

The Lake St. men knew how to drive it, and I'll always remember one Friday night in my Broadway car, as I sat back on the double track at Washington, how the 12:30 Robbinsdale, packed full from end to end, came around the curve onto Broadway at about 40 miles an hour. No carnival ever offered a ride like that. I think it was early in 1947 that even the Lake St. men got disgusted, and screwed up the line on the night runs so that all nine cars that were out were together in one bunch. Then some rush hour cars were given a minute or two extra running time.

I had to admire one thing about our Berquam, and that was how on Washington Ave., with traffic all over the street, trucks double-parking and pulling in and out, passenger stops to make and change and transfers to issue, he kept the controller in the corner between stops, and kept the gong ringing, and all at the same time laid a flat wrapper on his knee and counted out and rolled up 40 tokens; AND made the lights to go into Robbinsdale."

Nothing escaped Ed's notice, and he recorded this note in 1951, three years after the Robbinsdale streetcars had quit.

"Streetcars filled in for buses quite often this spring. North Side was short of buses and often cut A.M. Robbinsdale pullouts. The remaining buses couldn't haul everyone, so streetcars covered the missing trips from Broadway and Penn to downtown."

TCRT FIGHTS WINTER

Running streetcars through a Minnesota winter was tough, especially during heavy snow. Wheels slipped on slick rail or bogged down in drifts. Flangeways filled with ice and switch points froze. Streetcars had no defrosters so windshields frosted over. The ever-increasing number of automobiles clogged the roads and cars parked farther into the street fouled the tracks. Schedules went out the window as everything—acceleration, running speed, braking, passenger loading—slowed considerably. Here are three stories, plus newspaper photos from the Minnesota Historical Society collection (unless otherwise noted) that show what it was like.

THE NIGHT #1241 DIDN'T MAKE IT

-Ken Johnson

This story first appeared in the May-June 1976 MTM Minnegasette.

I began my TCRT streetcar career in 1946 shortly after getting out of the Navy. The night was in January 1949. I was working a regular run on the Maria-Fort Snelling line. As I was cashing in for the day at Duluth Avenue Station the clerk asked me if I would work a "store extra" as the man marked up for it was ill. Always eager for extra pay, I agreed. The store extra, I

was told, was to double head the 9:15 Mahtomedi. I was to be in front of the Mahtomedi and go only as far as North St. Paul.

The weather was mild for January; the temperature had been around the freezing mark all day. I was marked up for car #1241. I had always liked that particular car—it was smooth running, had good brakes and above all, it was warm.

I pulled out, headed for the loop. As I was going down the hill on East 7th Street, it started to mist—a fine light rain. By the time I reached the Main Street loop, it had turned freezing. The regular Mahtomedi car was due at 7 Corners at 9:12 PM. I waited a few extra minutes, but the Mahtomedi never showed, so I pulled down to 7th and Wabasha and loaded up. By the time we left the loop, the car was loaded to the vestibules!

As we ascended the East 7th Street hill, the ice began forming on the trolley wire. By the time we reached Duluth Avenue Station, the trolley wheel was really flashing—they could see us coming ten blocks away. We stopped briefly to pick up a red kerosene lantern which was required for anyone operating out on the single track. The yard man thought I should convert to an ice cutter for the trolley wheel (an ice cutter is a brass half hoop resembling a horse shoe, except it had several sharp teeth for scraping ice off the wire).

The ice cutter installed, we started off. Crossing the railroad bridge in Hazel Park, it broke loose and was lost. About that time, I was beginning to get worried, because I still had quite few passengers. Henry Street in North St. Paul was our destination (so I thought), but it was getting worse the further we went. We reached Ivy Avenue, the end of double track operation. At this point, it was required to call the dispatcher and ask for clearance to go out on the single track.

It was a formal thing, and went something like this—"Johnson car #1241—eastbound at Ivy to Henry Street". The dispatcher would reply back "Proceed to Henry Street and report". I told the dispatcher it was bad out here and getting worse by the minute. He replied that the Mahtomedi had not passed through the loop yet, so I'd have to go and just do the best I could.

We hadn't gone very far when I lost power—too much ice on the wire. I got out, went to the back of the car, pulled the trolley pole down, and using the rope, banged the pole against the wire. This caused the wire to sway and the ice would break loose for five or six blocks. We went through this procedure eight or ten times. Finally arriving at Henry Street with about ten passengers aboard, I again called the dispatcher. His orders were—proceed to Mahtomedi and report. There was no turning back. There was a duty to perform—get those ten passengers to their destination.

The weather worsened. I could now only break the ice loose for a few hundred feet at a time. I'm really worried now; I had put in a nine hour day, I was tired and now this. And my wife didn't know where I was. At times when we lost power, I didn't quite know where we were—out in the middle of a farmer's field perhaps. I had to do some planning!

If we could crest the Long Lake hill, we could coast down the other side and possibly roll all the way to Wildwood siding. Of course, we were going to need help to get back. The Long Lake hill is quite steep and a half mile long. By now the ice had built up on the rails and I was lucky to get 20 mph out of #1241. We had no power and had to be careful we didn't lose all of our air.

The car finally stopped at the bottom of the hill with the back portion blocking a lane of traffic on the county road crossing the track. Wouldn't you know, here comes an auto down the road! The streetcar is dark. I knew he'd hit us broadside, if not stopped. I grabbed the red lantern, dashed out onto the road and started waving it furiously. He finally saw the light, applied his brakes and swerved into the ditch. The support wire on the wooden trolley pole actually kept him from going completely to the bottom of the ditch. I went over to see if he was hurt, and apologized to him. Using some sand from the sand box, and with the help of several passengers, we were able to put him back on the road again. He took several passengers to their destinations in Mahtomedi.

We were only about 200 yards short of the Wildwood Siding. The next half hour was spent banging the ice off the wire to cover those 200 yards. Reaching the siding, the rest of the passengers left, figuring it was better to walk.

I went to the phone booth, called the dispatcher and told him I was completely iced in and needed help. He said he would send the wire car. Now, the wire car was one of those TCRT red work cars with a platform on the back which is high enough to work on the wire.

It was almost midnight and the only sign of life around was a lighted café sign just a few blocks up the road at Willernie. I needed a cup of coffee! Returning to #1241, I noticed the car was beginning to cool off, so I went out and stoked the stove with coal (we carried our own coal on board). Back in the car, I fell asleep on the long front seat. Awaking about 2 AM, I went to the phone booth and called the dispatcher. He reported that the overhead wire was down and the line was tied up. I asked him to please call my wife to let her know where I was.

Back to sleep again. Waking again at 4 AM, I called the dispatcher again. The wire was still down. Soon it began to get light. There was a rumbling coming from behind. Here comes the wire car with a man sitting on the top platform breaking the ice with a club. The wire car pushed #1241 into the wye at Wildwood and then continued to Mahtomedi. New orders came to wait for the wire car to return and then follow him to Henry Street.

Reaching Henry Street, there was mass confusion. Six cars were sitting on the siding. The day dispatcher was on duty now and he was irate because #1241 was out of place. I quickly explained what had happened. Calming down, he gave me new orders—"set signs to 7th Street to Duluth Avenue but report at Ivy Avenue". Finally I was going home!

When old #1241 pulled into the Duluth Avenue yard, it was one solid mass of ice. It looked like it had been pulled out of a lake.

FROST SHIELD NIGHT

-Edwin Nelson

According to Ed's notes on exterior and interior car details, frost shields of celluloid or some similar material were first used in 1937 on 1-man cars where they were placed on the three front windows, plus a small one above the back-up control. In fall of 1948 frost shields were also added to the window left of the controller window. Two-man gate cars had only two frost shields, one on the front window and a long narrow one in the mirror window.

Sat. March 3, 1951

As usual by this time of year, most of the frost shields on the cars had done their winter's duty and were cracked or lost or steamed or clouded up. But cold weather continued, with frozen

windows, and I had seen night run and owl men driving with just the tiniest peepholes to see through.

I had a night run with 4:45 PM relief, and car #1200 was brought to me from the station. It had no front shields, but windows were clear at the time. Northbound on Fremont with a fair load, the front windows started freezing. This was a winter of record snow, and pedestrians were walking in the streets a good deal, and I got nasty thoughts of long statistics of dead and injured; I didn't want any such on my record, and especially didn't want to hit anyone and say I didn't SEE them. So at 44th and Oliver I called Harry at North Side Station to get a car change at Broadway.

I asked for a car with good frost shields and got #1576, which I found to have two terrible spots in the frost shield, so I had to crouch down to see out at all, and had a headache within two blocks. At 2nd and 6th downtown I called up about the frost shields. At Broadway and Emerson a shopman came over with a knife and ripped off my clouded frost shields. I asked, "What if it freezes over?" and he said "What's a matter with your eyes. You better have your eyes examined." I told the shopman I would pull in from 42nd and Thomas. And I did, so I missed a trip to 48th and Chicago. I pulled in and went out to look for a car with a good frost shield. Looked at the front car on every track, and the only OK's were a car on track 3 marked up for the owl, and gate car 1345. I told night clerk Harry Dean. He went out and had them move a car off track 1, and pull out 1586 for me, with good frost shields. I saw it was a car which had just pulled in at 11 PM with no fire in the heater, so I wouldn't take it. I took the owl home and lay awake long thinking of all the safety talks I had heard.

Monday I got the works from Syrdal the foreman. He was shocked that he was such a bad judge of my character, he was shocked that there were no Fremonts from 12:06 to 12:36 a.m. I should be able to go a trip without a fire. As for frost shields, they didn't used to have them, the old timers used to go out with a bag of salt and a razor blade. He repeated three times "If you're not satisfied with the equipment you'd better start looking for another job." I said I was partly in the wrong, as you can't argue with a tyrant, and Syrdal was strictly an old-time tyrant, except that he was very nice when he wanted you to do something.

A MARCH SNOW TALE

-John Diers

I was eight years old in 1952 and a fervent traction enthusiast. By then, Fred Ossanna and Barney Larrick were in charge at TCRT, and it was common knowledge that the streetcar's days were numbered. I wanted to ride as much as possible, but my parents didn't share my enthusiasm and were about to move to a brand new home in Bloomington, miles from the nearest streetcar line. However, my grandparents were more sympathetic and every Saturday we'd go streetcar riding. One Saturday in March of 1952 was unforgettable.

My dad usually drove me to their home early Saturday morning. They lived on County Road 15 in Plymouth. To get downtown from their place we had to take a battered, blue school bus operated by "Mercury Lines", a mom and pop outfit that ran a route from the Hennepin County Workhouse at Parkers Lake via County Road 15, Highway 55, and Glenwood Avenue to a suburban bus depot on 1st Avenue North near 7th Street.



delayed by a dewirement near 44th and France. I remember the motorman complaining in strong language about how "they weren't taking care of things anymore," From there, we had no difficulty making our way to St. Paul. At Rice and University we joined a long queue of cars working their way past the capitol and down Wabasha Street. We had lunch at Lee's Broiler, but, when we came out, it was apparent that we were in the middle of a spring blizzard. My grandmother wanted to check on a sale at Scheuneman's department store. We ducked into the store, and my grandfather looked for a pay phone to call my mom and let her know all was well. By the time we left Scheuneman's and walked to the car stop at 5th and Wabasha, it was snowing and blowing so hard that it was impossible to see up the hill toward the capitol. By then, grandfather had abandoned our original plan and decided we should grab a St. Paul-Minneapolis car and head for home. It was a good decision. However, what normally would have been a 50-minute trip turned into a two and a half hour crawl. We were the first car in a block long train of Como-Harriet and St. Paul-Minneapolis cars that slowly looped around Wabasha, Fifth, Robert, Ninth and back to Wabasha. We arrived at Rice and University to discover that the electric track switch was set for Rice Street and wouldn't throw. Our motorman got out, and with assistance from a supervisor, managed to line it for University Avenue.

Snow was predicted that Saturday, but grandfather just shrugged it off. The bus was on time at 8 o'clock and we were on our way. By the time we got downtown and walked to the corner of 7th and Hennepin, there were two inches of snow on the ground. It would only get worse. Our plan was to ride a Como-Hopkins car to the end of the

line at Brookside, then turn around and ride to St. Paul, have lunch at Lee's Broiler, and return to downtown Minneapolis on the Selby-Lake and Como-Harriet. There was a bus going back to Plymouth at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and my grandfather thought we could make it back in plenty of time. He was wrong. We never did,

and it was almost 8 o'clock at night when we finally arrived at my parent's apartment at Meadowbrook Manor in St. Louis Park.

Two Bryant cars and an Oak-Harriet came along. A few minutes later a Como-Hopkins pulled up, and I grabbed my favorite peanut row seat behind the motorman. We were briefly

University was covered, curb-to-curb, with three or four inches of heavy, wet snow. There were no city plows at work. The streetcars cut a shallow swath and were getting through but were stymied by dozens of automobiles stuck on the tracks. Several times, my grandfather and other passengers had to get off and help push them out of the way. One



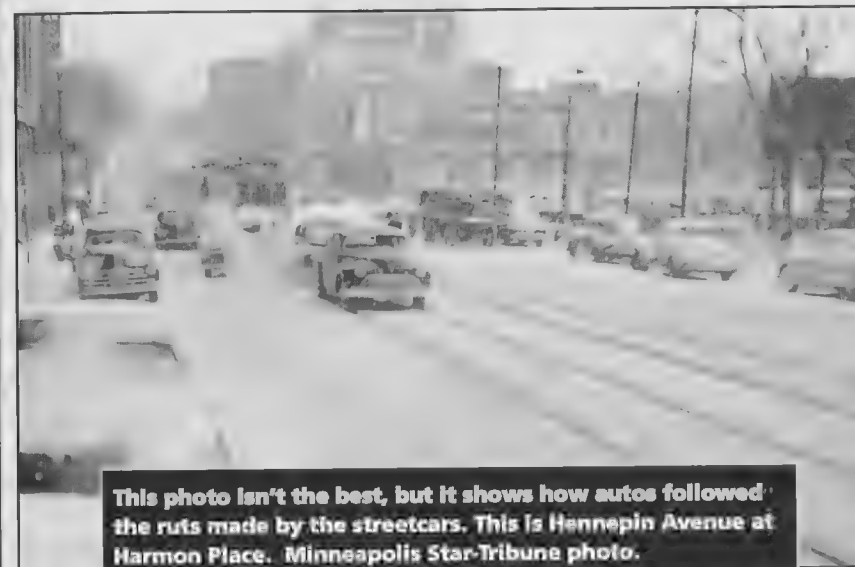
Interurban and Como-Harriet cars bunch up on Robert Street between 7th and 8th Streets in downtown St. Paul. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.

fellow's car was wedged so tight against a safety island that our exasperated motorman pulled up and shoved it off the tracks. Unfortunately, the PCCs didn't do well in this stuff. The snow packed around the lifeguard and the lead truck, and every other block, or so, the car stalled, and our motorman had to stop and dig us out.

We finally made it to Snelling Station where a standard car was waiting on the yard lead. Several laborers were at work thawing switches so it could pull out on University Avenue and begin clearing the way for us. By then our line of PCCs stretched almost two blocks. Things improved with the standard car up front and we eventually made it to Emerald and University where a

snowplow sat on the wye. Its crew was conferring with a supervisor in a mobile unit. We paused to allow the plow to pull out of the wye and on to University Avenue ahead of our convoy.

With the plow and the standard car in the lead we finally arrived at 5th and Marquette. It was almost five o'clock. We'd already missed the 4 o'clock bus—if it was running at all—so grandfather decided to take a Grand-Monroe car a few blocks to my uncle's jewelry store at 14th and Nicollet. My aunt was there. She had been shopping that afternoon and doing some work at her office in the Northwestern Bank Building. My uncle had planned to drop me off at my parent's place and then take my grandparents home. But



This photo isn't the best, but it shows how autos followed the ruts made by the streetcars. This is Hennepin Avenue at Harmon Place. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo.

the storm had other plans. We finally made it to Meadowbrook Manor and my mother put me to bed. The next morning I awoke to find my grand-parents and my aunt and uncle sleeping in chairs in our living room. They made it as far as Excelsior Boulevard but had to abandon the car after it got stuck in a snowdrift. I went back to my room and turned on the radio to hear Cedric Adams report that dozens of streetcars and buses and their passengers were stranded all over the city. Luckily, we weren't among them.



Hamline-Cherokee cars at the north end of the Wabasha Street bridge at Kellogg Boulevard. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



Como-Harriet cars on Hennepin at Douglas, the south end of the infamous "Bottleneck". Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo.



The motormen and conductors were TCRT's public face, but there were many other employees whose role was crucial to running the system, especially during bad weather. At top, an inspector, more commonly called a starter, checks off passing cars outside his booth at 5th and Hennepin. On a day like this, he'll be shortlining late cars and ordering extras to fill in. At East Side Station, a track department employee cleans out a switch frog to prevent a derailment when a car pulls in or out. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photos.



These Minnehaha-Fort Snelling cars descending the 42nd Avenue S. hill at Hlawatha Avenue have run into snow drifted over the rails. This was a shallow cut next to an open windy area and prone to drifting. The lead car is equipped with stick-on frost shields that were used to reduce frost buildup. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photos.



Viewed from the Coffman Union foot bridge, Interurban cars cross the Washington Avenue bridge. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo.



In 1952, 34th Avenue S. cars back up on Franklin Avenue at Chicago. Minneapolis Star-Tribune photo.



When the snow got really deep, the fenders scooped it up and sometimes had to be removed. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



Derailments were a hazard of snow plowing. This is Randolph Avenue at Davern Street. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.

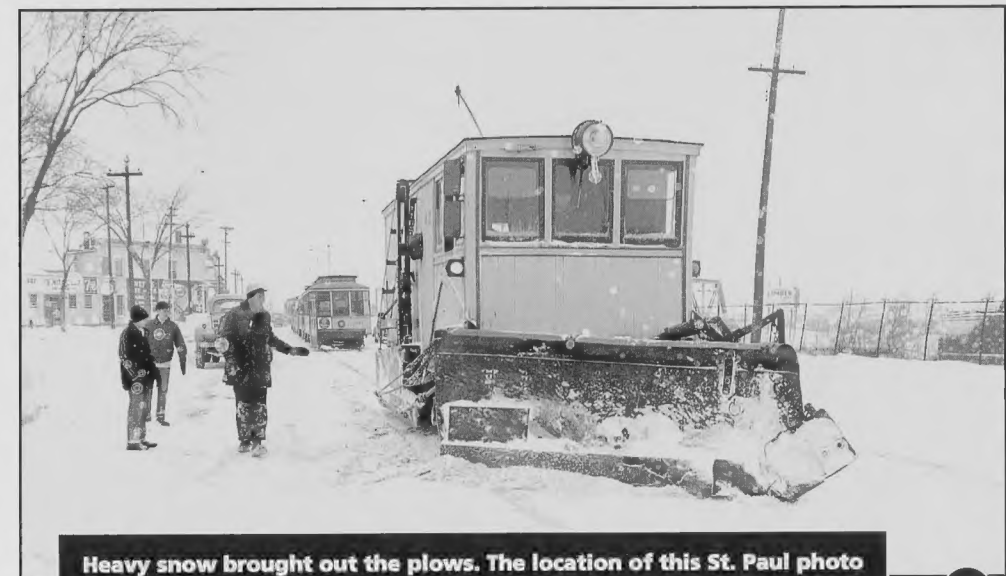


One of the more spectacular plow derailments happened on Central Avenue, just south of Broadway.





This incident isn't snow-related, but it's just what the company didn't need. For reasons unknown, PCC #417 on the Hamline-Cherokee backed into the wye at Smith and Annapolis, rolled off the end of the rails and came to rest almost a city block away. Two service trucks combined to tow it back to the end of track, where a drawbar was attached to another streetcar and it was eventually rerailed. St. Paul Pioneer Press photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



Heavy snow brought out the plows. The location of this St. Paul photo is a mystery. Reader's guesses are invited. St. Paul Pioneer Press photo.



These photos taken in January 1952 reveal a previously unknown winter trackwork practice. Tracks repairs required removing the frozen granite blocks surrounding the rails, but first they had to be thawed. Even though the crew is equipped with bottled gas torches, apparently the preferred method was to pour a flammable liquid like kerosene or gasoline over the blocks and ignite it. After it burned off, the area was covered with straw to retain the heat. OSHA surely wouldn't approve of the fellow pouring the liquid directly on the fire. This is Rice and University. St. Paul Pioneer Press photos.



Inside Rear Cover: Should she drive through the flames or wait? That's a question that might have gone through the mind of this motorette and her conductor.

Rear Cover: This striking unintentional work of art was taken to document the 1949 Wabasha Street Christmas decorations. It looks north from 5th Street, with the state capitol in the distance.

All St. Paul Pioneer Press photos, Minnesota Historical Society collection.



